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**SOURCE REF**

## ROUTING

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DATE: 28 JAN 74

SUBJECT: WASHINGTON POST VIEW OF SOVIET NAVAL THREAT IN  
INDIAN OCEAN

THE WASHINGTON POST'S VERSION OF THE LATEST PENTAGON REVIEWS ON THE SOVIET NAVAL THREAT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WAS PUBLISHED SATURDAY AND DIFFERS SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THE DREW MIDDLETON ARTICLE IN FRIDAY'S NEW YORK TIMES. THE POST VERSION--BY MICHAEL GETLER AND DAN MORGAN--OFFERS A MORE BALANCED AND REALISTIC PICTURE OF PROBABLE SOVIET SHIP MOVEMENT TO THE INDIAN OCEAN AFTER THE SUEZ CANAL IS OPENED THAN THE TIMES ARTICLE DID.

2 THE POST ARTICLE SPECIFICALLY AVOIDS THE JUDGMENTS THAT  
1 CURRENT SOVIET NAVAL FORCES ARE MILITARILY SUPERIOR TO US FORCES

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# OUTGOING MESSAGE

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IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THAT THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL WILL AUTOMATICALLY CREATE A NET SOVIET ADVANTAGE. BOTH JUDGMENTS WERE MADE OR IMPLIED IN THE TIMES ARTICLE.

THE POST WRITERS SPECULATE THAT, ALTHOUGH THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL WOULD MAKE THE PERSIAN GULF AREA MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE SOVIET FLEET, THE SOVIETS WOULD NOT "TRANSFER MANY MORE SHIPS FROM SUCH HIGHER PRIORITY AREAS IN THE ATLANTIC, PACIFIC OR MEDITERRANEAN." SOVIET USE OF PORTS AND AIRFIELDS IN SOMALIA AND SOUTH YEMEN COULD BE MORE SIGNIFICANT.

ONE INACCURACY IS NOTED IN THE ARTICLE AND CONCERNS THE REFUELING OF SOVIET SHIPS IN INDIA. SOVIET NAVAL SHIPS MAKE ONLY ONE OR TWO CALLS ANNUALLY IN INDIA AND ARE NOT KNOWN TO HAVE CALLED THERE SINCE BEFORE THE RECENT MIDDLE EAST CRISIS. STATEMENTS ON SOVIET PRIVILEGES AT OTHER PORTS AND AIRFIELDS MAY BE OVERLY BROAD OR IMPLY FREED ACCESS THAN THEY NOW HAVE.

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